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# The Reason and the Result

—OF—

# CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE NATIONAL CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM LEAGUE

AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING HELD MAY 29, 1888

—BY—

HON. GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

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NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED FOR THE

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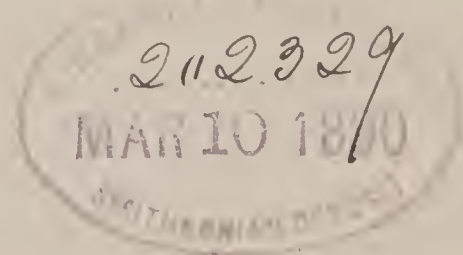
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# THE REASON AND THE RESULT

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THIRTY-SIX years ago when Franklin Pierce was elected President the happy end of the anti-slavery agitation was announced. But ten years after the election of Pierce, Abraham Lincoln issued the proclamation of emancipation. The course of American history does not depend upon Presidents but upon the people. Of that fact even the managers of nominating conventions are aware, and therefore, although they detest Civil Service reform and insist that it is extinct, I venture to predict that one of the great conventions which will soon assemble, will praise the President for his fidelity to reform and the other will denounce him as the chief of sinners against it, — each party assuming not that reform is dead, but what is perfectly true, that it is more alive than ever before. Party platforms are valuable not so much for what they say as for what they indicate. They are rag bags of an extraordinary assortment of pieces, but they are all of the texture and the colors which are believed to be popular. They would make a most crazy quilt, but they are an excellent guide to the political fashion because they are selected by very shrewd judges.

I think that nobody is more interested than we are to know the exact situation of the reform movement or to state it more accurately. Last year we told what we believed to be the truth of the



present administration, in regard to reform, as we have always sought to tell the truth of every administration and we were assured that our meeting was like a funeral feast. But we could safely reply that if the remark were true, then, in the familiar phrase, it was certainly not our funeral. Undoubtedly more had been expected of this administration than of any of its predecessors because of the frequent and friendly declarations of the President, and because his election by the votes of those who were not of his party authorized an independence of action which a President elected solely by the vote of his party might feel to be denied to him. This anticipation has been largely disappointed, but the disappointment must not make us unjust or unmindful of the fact that although the President has done much and has permitted much that every friend of reform must deplore, yet he has maintained all that had been gained in the examinations, he has extended the range of the classified service, and he has revised and strengthened the rules. Certainly this is not all that had been expected, but the general and intelligent public regret that he has done no more shows how strong is the desire of reform in the public mind.

That is the essential question in all reform movements. They are at first addressed to public opinion, and parties and administrations very slowly respond. But this slow response must not deceive us. In 1852 the Whig party, dodging the slavery question, cast 1,400,000 votes, and the anti-slavery party only 155,000. But four years later the Whig artful dodger had disappeared, and the anti-slavery sentiment, organized as the Republican party, cast more than 1,300,000 votes. Twenty years ago when Mr. Jenckes, of Rhode Island, spoke here in New York to a few persons in the chapel of the University upon reform in the

Civil Service he was like Paul in Athens declaring the unknown God. To-day there has been for six years a law of Congress embodying his views. In the White House there is a President, elected because he held those views. The press of the opposition party assails him chiefly for abandoning them, and an opposition Committee of the Senate is accumulating evidence to prove if it can that he has done even less for reform than other Presidents, and therefore ought not to be re-elected. This is hardly consonant with the theory of the death and burial of reform. Party investigating committees on the eve of elections do not trouble themselves with spent rockets. In observing the movement of public opinion against public abuses we need not be troubled because it is not uniform or universal, nor because results do not keep equal pace with eager hopes. It is not until the axe has made many and deep gashes in the trunk that the tree begins to yield. Long after the blows that will level it have begun it towers unshaken in its pride of place. Nevertheless, it is doomed. The stroke of the axe is strong and steady, ringing with cheerful music, and at last the towering tree is laid low.

The history of English liberty is the story of the restraint and regulation of patronage. When the revolution of 1688 had expelled the Stuarts and was supposed to have substituted Parliament for the prerogative, the House of Hanover sought instinctively to recover the complete prerogative by subduing Parliament, and its most powerful weapon was patronage. Its corruption was universal. Political freedom was in mortal peril. To be one of the king's friends was to be an enemy of English liberty, and Lord Chatham thanked God when he heard that

America had resisted in arms because he knew that English liberty was to be saved, as it was saved, in America.

This disgraceful and humiliating story has an unpleasantly familiar sound. Read upon the English page, we pity the subjects of a monarchy where such things were possible. We wonder that an intelligent people did not rise in wrath and sweep them away, and we complacently find in them admirable arguments for republican government. But, unhappily, while we read and wonder, and cry shame, we are looking in a mirror. It is ourselves we are flouting and scorning. "My dear sir," says Thackeray, "I remark your virtuous indignation with snobbery. Very good; you are the snob whom I am describing." There is no more ignominious chapter in the history of the English speaking race than that of the struggle of George the Third to withstand the progress of liberty by the power of patronage. But we are fast coming to see in this country that for sixty years we have been busily writing a different chapter of the same disgrace. One New York politician writes to another from Washington on the 17th of March, 1829, only a fortnight after the inauguration of General Jackson: "From the manner in which the President has exercised his power thus far I am inclined to think that he will go the whole hog." The sagacious observer was not disappointed. The swinish saturnalia had begun and it proceeded with rapidly swelling fury. We need not waste our wonder, or satire, or contemptuous scorn, upon England and George the Third. Of this shame at least England has purged herself, while there are recreant Americans who boast of it as practical politics and who are actually proud of it in its worst form as peculiarly American.

In the modest beginning of our government there was the



gravest apprehension of the danger lurking in patronage. In creating a new civil service it was feared that the control of its patronage together with the command of the army and navy and the state militia, would invest the President with authority to secure the prolongation of his own powers and even the perpetuity of the Presidency in his family. This apprehension reveals an instinctively wise forecast. The danger was there, but its precise form was not accurately foreseen. Soon, however, it appeared; gradually the sovereignty of party was substituted for that of the king, and it was sought to be maintained by the king's old weapon of patronage. Before the Constitution was adopted by the necessary number of states, and before Washington had consented to accept a nomination for the Presidency, the pressure for place began with such force that he rebuked the indecent urgency. Yet the whole number of employees in the civil service during his administration Washington describes as "a handfull," and the revenue with which the government had to deal was but \$2,000,000. Nevertheless the pressure was enormous and forecast the vast and deadly power of patronage and the desperate struggle for its control.

But the only consideration which Washington entertained even in the chief appointments of his administration was fidelity to the new constitution and government. Proscribing no one for political reasons, removing no one except for misconduct or incapacity, he exercised the power of appointment solely in the public interest, and neither for partisan advantage nor personal aggrandizement. During his administration parties were organized and when Hamilton and Jefferson were party leaders, party spirit, we may be sure, was not less fierce than now. But

Washington, neither an idealist nor a sentimentalist, but the most practical of statesmen, resolutely withstood its evil counsels, and in all that concerns the Civil Service an American President could have no better exemplar than Washington.

With the inauguration of Jefferson the determined assault of party to control the national patronage began. By his fantastic theory of equitable distribution of patronage between the parties Jefferson drew out the bolts and then held the flood-gates by main force. It was obviously a mere question of time when the pressure would be mighty enough to sweep every barrier away. Jefferson had surrendered the cardinal principle that the great system of minor ministerial non-political places are not party prizes, but public trusts to which fitness alone is the only valid claim, and from which dismissal for the mere purpose of rewarding partisans is a public wrong. The contempt of this principle which already ran riot in the two great States of New York and Pennsylvania, and which was one of the worst excesses of party spirit, would not be likely to relinquish its assaults upon the national government when the government itself conceded that half its demand was just.

John Quincy Adams, worthy son of a worthy sire, interposed the final obstruction to the rising deluge. Among all our Presidents none was more courageous, more admirably equipped, or more sternly upright. The disdainful independence with which he commended the official efficiency of his Postmaster-General McLean while his Postmaster-General McLean was using the patronage of his office to defeat his chief, was worthy of the Roman Cato. His superb scorn of crawling politics makes the page of our annals upon which it is recorded a moral tonic. It

was very magnificent, we are told, but it was not politics. That depends upon the point of view. It was not the politics of Aaron Burr, but it was the politics of Washington. Had Adams prostituted the executive patronage to his own personal advantage he might have gained a second term of the Presidency, but he would have forfeited his self-respect and have lost the noble renown which invests his name.

It was by General Jackson, forty years after the Government was established, that the spoils revolution was accomplished, and the transfer of the power of patronage from the King to a party was completed. During its progress it had been opposed in speeches, reports, earnest protests, solemn warnings and proposed acts of legislation, but nothing could withstand it. Ten years after Jackson's election reform was the Whig cry. But it was only a cry. The tiger of party had tasted blood. There was no Whig purpose or policy of reform. The hard cider campaign of 1840 was a laughing and singing political picnic. Exhausted with the panic of 1857 the country wanted change and called it reform, and as James the Second was said to have been sung out of the three kingdoms by the song of Lilliburlero, Van Buren was sung out of the Presidency by a mighty chorus of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too."

General Harrison alone took the campaign seriously. He pledged himself, as he said, "before the world" that if elected President he would use all his power and influence to abridge the power of the national executive, and to that end he again pledged himself "before heaven and earth" if elected President not to seek another term. He was elected, and Mr. Webster as Secretary of State wrote the warning circular to office-holders, which was



read with universal incredulity, and was as little heeded by officeholders or enforced by the executive as subsequent circulars of the same kind. The Whigs out-Jacksoned Jackson. When business was prostrate and the country discontented with the administration, reform was a convenient cry to turn the revenues of patronage from Democratic to Whig pockets. But if any Whig had suggested in the Harrison Convention of 1840 that the party did not mean a complete change of the Civil Service an overwhelming host of Flanagans would have shouted with honest amazement, "what are we here for?" and the summary sweep that followed Harrison's inauguration would have answered.

From that time until recently party has prostituted the power of patronage as ruthlessly, as arbitrarily, as selfishly, as dangerously to liberty and the public welfare, as it was prostituted by the Hanoverian kings. The public service ceased to be regarded as a public trust, and had become party spoils and when Mr. Jenckes raised the first battle cry of civil service reform in the sense in which it is demanded by this League, the abuse was apparently impregnable in tradition, in conviction, in the strongest passion and the most venal interest. It was held that the whole civil service in every degree, political and non-political, indiscriminately from the English Embassy to the scrubbing of floors and carrying coal in the public offices was the mere perquisite of the successful party. In 1848 Mr. Buchanan, then Democratic Secretary of State, declared in a public speech that if General Taylor did not proscribe his opponents he would prove faithless to his party. And long afterwards a Republican Secretary of the Treasury told me that when the country changed the party of administration it meant to change not only the Secretary of the Treasury but the messenger at the door of his office.



Surely it is an immense advance of the reform sentiment and another signal illustration of the wholesome state of the public mind that last week a Democratic Secretary of the Treasury said in a public speech: "But I hope to live to see the day when the great majority of the public offices shall be non-political, that is, when it shall not be considered needful to party government and party responsibility that many changes should be made in the purely administrative offices. There are many difficulties in the way of this that only time and public opinion can remove; but I believe that from the necessities of the case they will be removed. My own wish that as few public offices as possible should be in political category is based not alone or chiefly on the hope or the belief that the conduct of the public business will be improved thereby, but because I believe that a grave cause of party weakness and demoralization will be removed and that thereby the public will greatly gain." If party exigencies and interests on the eve of a Presidential nomination make the obstructions and difficulties seem very much more insurmountable to the Secretary than to us, yet the fact of such a declaration from such an officer and gentleman, is one of the most hopeful signs of the times.

Under the system which has so long subjugated the country, the newly-elected President, compelled by the demands of his party to turn out the great body of public officers, agents and employees, and necessarily ignorant of proper persons to appoint in every part of a Continental Republic, depends for information upon Senators and Representatives, upon whom also the success of his administration depends. The executive and legislative authority carefully separated by the Constitution, become dangerously confused. Representatives demand the patronage of their

districts and Senators practically usurp the power of nomination. From the executive and legislative commerce in places arises a huge office-holding hierarchy ascending in regular gradation from the lowest employees to the highest officer, each dependent upon the other and all united in a common purpose to control general and local politics for their personal advantage. An organized political class independent of the great body of the people practically absorbs the authority of the people. By mercenary control of caucuses and conventions they nominate candidates and require implicit obedience to their will as the condition of political preferment. By assessing the salaries of their subordinates the leaders of this class levy a tax upon the public treasury for their own benefit and that of a party. The voters of the party submit to their sway because refusal seems to mean the success of the opposition. Party ceases to be a voluntary union to shape public policy and becomes a faction to promote private gain and gratify personal ambition. Politics degenerate into mere place-hunting and venal jobbery. Self-respecting men withdraw more and more from public life. Honorable ambition disappears. Bosses replace statesmen. The young American is taught that the qualifications for public service are not integrity, intelligence and industry, but sycophancy and servility, cheating and bribing, and every kind of disorderly violence and unmanly trickery. He must be a parasite or a ruffian instead of a man. In such a situation loss of self-respect becomes the condition of public employment. The evil system multiplies enormously unnecessary places. It stimulates reckless extravagance in public expenditure. It controls the vast contracts of the government. It transforms the highest officers of administration into brokers of petty place. It subsi-

dizes the press, defiles the American name, debauches the national character, until under its degrading mastery the power of the people passes into the hands of a venal oligarchy, and a Presidential election ceases to be a contest of differing policies determined by free argument before the people, and becomes a ferocious and desperate struggle for the emoluments of place.

This was our indictment against the evil system when we organized the League seven years ago. It was written upon the consciousness of every American citizen familiar with practical politics. It is written there still. Undoubtedly the systematic suppression of the right of suffrage in some states and organized frauds at the polls in others are wrongs affecting the whole union, which cannot be safely neglected. Reduction of the surplus and a just scheme of tariff taxation, like every question of taxation and finance, demand prompt attention. But a system of administration which perverts the entire civil service to the destruction of the true function of party, which makes the loss of self-respect the condition of public employment, which debauches politics and degrades the national character, seems to me as vital a question as can be proposed to the country. I can imagine the question of suffrage left to the states, and, relieved from external pressure, gradually and wisely solved. It is conceivable that the vigorous enterprise and marvelous prosperity of the country might endure indefinitely even an unjust and exorbitant tariff. But it is not conceivable that the executive patronage can increase in the ratio of the growth of the last few years, unregulated and unrestrained, without the gravest peril to the government.

The great service of the League, hitherto, lies in arousing the



public mind, in creating a powerful public opinion, and in stimulating practical measures of reform. We have procured the passage of wise and comprehensive reform laws. We have proved the entire practicability of the selection of the great host of subordinate officers and employés by tests of fitness instead of personal favor and political interest. We have made the political abuse of patronage odious in the public mind. We have stigmatized the system of political assessments, driven it into shameful concealment, and greatly reduced its ravages. We have carried up to the Supreme Court of the United States the question of the constitutionality of the law forbidding such assessments, and we have secured an opinion in its favor. We have raised in a state court the question, fortified by precedent, whether the fundamental principles of this reform are not parts of the common law regulation of all offices of trust. We have exposed the outrage of office-holding interference in caucuses and elections, and while it is not remedied, it is discredited, denounced, and greatly diminished. We have taught public officers who engage in active party politics that they are closely watched, and if not rebuked by the executive, they are censured by sound public sentiment. We have compelled public explanations of wrongs which were formally matters of course, and we have stimulated a sensitiveness in the press which gives no rest to public officers who abuse their trusts as party spies. In Indiana we have relentlessly revealed the foulness of political management of public charitable institutions. In Maryland we have inexorably told the truth of the abandonment of the national public service to politics. In Massachusetts we have adjusted the reformed system to the selection of laborers. In New York we are seeking at Buffalo with the strong approval



of the most intelligent citizens of every party and church the introduction of the principle of reform into the selection of public teachers.

I say that we have done this, not to arrogate to the League an exclusive action or interest, but in the sense of that wide-spread and essentially American conviction that party abuse of the civil service is an intolerable public wrong, and of the equally determined and characteristic American resolution to correct it, of which the League is the organized representative. Meanwhile on every hand the indirect results of this movement are evident. The growing exclusion of mere partisan sympathy from the selection of Judges; the universal and increasing disposition to separate municipal administration from party politics; the wise and well-sustained efforts to reform ballot and election laws in the interest of honesty; laws for which the conclusive arguments are the character and purposes of those who oppose them; the indignation and disgust with which the public learns that the costliest public works, like the construction of the new aqueduct to supply the city of New York, are made subjects of deals and intrigues for the profit of politicians and their confederates, and the consequent determination that so far as practicable the devil that defiles such undertakings shall be cast out,—these are all fruits of the intelligent and patriotic public spirit which is evoked by the movement for Civil Service Reform. Whoever supposes that its course is checked or its success endangered because the President writes a letter to influence a local election, or because post-offices are still treated as party booty, would despair of flood tide because every successive wave is not higher than its predecessor and lose all hope of coming mid-summer because there are chilly days in May.

There are two important measures yet to be adopted: first, the repeal of the four years law, a law which enables a complete partisan change of the service to be made in a way which permits the executive to escape, as in such a case he ought not to escape, the odium of arbitrary removals. This repeal we have constantly and warmly urged. The other practical measure which seems to me of even greater importance but which the League has not yet advocated, is an amendment to the Constitution extending somewhat the term of the Presidency and making the President ineligible for a second term. The wisest of our foreign political critics, De Tocqueville, who was here fifty-six years ago when the great partisan abuse of patronage in the national Government was but beginning, said with characteristic acuteness, that a candidate who is not the President, seeking the presidency, is but an individual, while the President seeking re-election is the state itself intriguing and corrupting with its immense resources. My accomplished colleague upon the first Civil Service Commission, Mr. Joseph Medill, of Chicago, signed the report of the Commission to President Grant, but he also submitted a supplementary report in which he urged with great force that a constitutional amendment prohibiting a second term is a preliminary measure without which an effective reform in the service is wholly impracticable.

The unwritten law which forbids a third term to any President is founded in the reason which would prohibit a second term, and which great American statesmen have strongly stated, Jackson, who advised Monroe to be the President of the whole people and not of a party, but who, when he reached the White House, was the most absolute of party Presidents, twice urged

upon Congress the passage of an amendment limiting the Presidency to one term. Harrison pledged himself, as I have said, to a single term, but perished in a month under the fierce pressure for place. Henry Clay in 1842 declared such an amendment to be the principal object of the Whig party, and in 1844, the Whig Convention, which nominated him, resolved that it was inseparable from the public honor and prosperity, and Webster gave it his approval and support. Charles Sumner introduced in the Senate an amendment providing for the ineligibility of the President, and President Cleveland, in accepting the nomination four years ago, added his voice to the earlier warnings. He said: "When we consider the patronage of this great office, the allurements of power, the temptation to retain public places once gained, and more than all, the availability a party finds in an incumbent whom a horde of office-holders with a zeal born of benefits received and fostered by the hope of favors yet to come, stand ready to aid with money and political service, we recognize in the eligibility of the President for re-election a most serious danger to that calm, deliberate and intelligent action which must characterize a government of the people."

The tendency and temptation which in the mere prospect the President depicts in these decisive and accurate words, actual experience has doubtless proved to him to be stronger and more seductive than he imagined. The Secretary of the Treasury denies that the administration has abandoned reform and adds that the law has been rigidly enforced, its application extended and its spirit observed. But he would probably agree that if the constitution had made the President ineligible for re-election there would have been no reason for the assertion that reform had been



abandoned, the application of the law would have been much more widely extended, and its spirit would have been so generally observed that no successor of the President would have dared to return to the old abuses, and the President himself would have happily identified his name with one of the most beneficent political reforms in our annals. Let us help the Presidents of the future in their tremendous struggle. Even Ulysses did not dare to pass the sirens without lashing himself to the mast and stopping the ears of his comrades against their song. Let us save Ulysses hereafter from the irresistible allurements by making it impossible for the sirens' song to ensnare. The one term amendment is a measure, simple, practicable, intelligible, which would command, immediately, general and earnest support, and whose adoption would remove at once both the temptation and the danger which President Cleveland describes. It would emancipate every President from the absolute despotism of party and from the temptation of personal motives, and leave him in the greatest of offices with no motive for official action but the wish to deserve the praise of history by promoting the welfare of his whole country.

For the overwhelming partisan prostitution of the Civil Service with which we are familiar the only defence attempted is very simple. It is the assertion that the officers of the Government ought to be in harmony with the administration. This is true, but it is true only of such officers as are essential to carrying out its policy. The man would be laughed out of the country who should say seriously that under a free trade administration it is necessary to the proper operation of the Government that lighthouse keepers and Indian agents should be free traders, and that under a protection administration book-keepers and messengers



should favor a high tariff. The post-office is the chief patronage department of the Government, but there is no party method of sorting letters and the only politics of the railway mail service are honesty, quickness, accuracy and self-possession. Politics have no more to do with the business of the post-office than with the teaching of Greek in Columbia College. Post-offices have become the local centres of public politics because they have been treated as party prizes and not as public trusts; because postmasters have been taught that they are the agents of a party, not the servants of the people; and because political officers have been permitted unrebuked to suborn them as spies upon their neighbors.

There is no more reason in requiring a postmaster to agree with the President of the United States in political opinion than in requiring a railway engineer to agree with the religious views of the president of the road. The post-office was established for public convenience. It is the duty of the President to call into the postal service only persons who are fit for it in ability and character, and so long as they are efficient and faithful it is his duty in the public interest to retain them and a gross public wrong to remove them for political opinion. If their conduct toward the officer in whom the law vests their appointment is scandalous and unseemly they should be peremptorily dismissed, as unseemly conduct toward all appointing authorities is punished by dismissal; and if such dismissal should be said to abridge the political rights of American citizens, American citizens are quite sensible enough to know that unseemly conduct which they would not tolerate in their own private service should not be tolerated in the public service. But this is wholly different from

dismissal for political opinion from posts which are in no sense political. Such removals Madison declared would justify impeachment. And only because with all the great constitutional authority of his word he declared such removal to be an impeachable offense, and because Washington was President, by whom such abuse of authority was inconceivable, was the power of removal given by Congress to the President. But if before the evil day that we have seen, Madison thought such arbitrary removals impeachable misconduct, what would he have said had he seen the whole non-political public service trampled and scoured by the bloodhounds of all parties in turn, making prey of official fidelity, efficiency, and experience, and baying that such ravages are essentially American?

Unquestionably all officers of the Government whose duties are concerned with giving effect to the policy which the country has approved and whose offices bring them into personal and confidential relations with the heads of the Government, should be in entire sympathy and accord with those to whom the people have entrusted the conduct of the administration. But the great mass of officers and employees of the Civil Service are not of that kind, and they can be disturbed for political and party reasons only to the great detriment of the public welfare. An election which changes the public policy in ministerial management of the post-office, for instance, never changes, and the proposition to effect a political change of postmasters is merely a naked and monstrous scheme to transform a vital and universally diffused public convenience into a national electioneering agency for a party.

Driven from the utterly untenable position that the great body of the service is essentially political and therefore that after

every election there should be a partisan clean sweep to harmonize with the administration, the advocates of the evil system are forced into the last ditch, the assertion that parties are indispensable in a republic, and that the spoils system is essential to efficient party organization. This is merely an attempt to support an absurdity upon a falsehood. The falsehood is established by the experience of England. Nowhere is party feeling stronger, party purpose more definite, party organization more absolute and complete, and nowhere are party contests more strenuous and uncompromising, than in England. Yet Mr. Gladstone, the greatest of living party leaders of the English speaking race, says that it is impossible to understand why in America we permit the whole civil service to be disturbed by a Presidential election, and adds that in England a change of administration involves but the removal of a few score of persons. He is a sorry American who insists that young America is incapable of a practical national wisdom which old England displays.

But the assertion is false again because of the notorious fact that the apprehension of the disastrous consequences of the universal disturbance of the whole Civil Service every four years necessarily perplexes the election. If it be known, for instance, that the consequences of a successful vote for protection or tariff reform will be a general dismissal of all experienced and capable officers in the public service, that fact itself alarming the public mind will determine thousands of conservative votes, and just in that degree it prevents a vote upon the simple party issue. So long as the vast system of the public service with its enormous emoluments is treated as spoils, no great public question will be decided upon its merits. Again, party action in its true sense is



impossible until the spoils system is abolished, for when party becomes a conspiracy for spoils our politics, instead of true party politics, become necessarily personal politics. In that condition it is useless to insist that we must vote for principles and not for men, because then what are called principles are merely pretexts for turning out a hundred thousand men and turning in as many more. If party managers wish to induce the people to support principles and not men there are two ways of doing it; one is to nominate candidates who are personally and officially beyond just reproach, and the other is to convince us that it is the policy of the Government and not the great many of civil officers that will be changed. Then the mind of the voter is fixed upon principles and not upon men. But so long as an election means for the successful party a general sack of the civil service, like that of a long besieged and captured city, then it is the plunder, and the men who will give it and get it, not principle or national policy, which will be the supreme and absorbing motive of the election.

But these conclusive facts are but part of the argument. The consideration that should move most profoundly every worthy American is that the constant, watchful, deadly enemy of Republican Government from the beginning has been party spirit, and that in a country necessarily governed by party the highest interests of liberty imperatively demand the strict and tenacious limitation of party to its rightful sphere. In a Democratic Republic, where the majority of voters is sovereign, the vital question for liberty is that of the ability of the voters to restrain themselves. Constitutional liberty is not only liberty regulated by law, it is also law sustained by the moral disposition of the individual citizen. It lies in the ability of masses of men to control



their own passions. The exigencies and tests of liberty in this country have been many and great, but a more crucial hour the country never saw than that of the contested election of 1876. Constitution, law, and precedent, were all obscured. Party was arrayed angrily against party, and the peaceful continuance of the Government itself was involved. It was a strain along the very fibre of the American people and by the grace of God it did not give. Party spirit yielded to patriotic instinct and the great victory of popular Government was won. In that supreme hour who was the traitor to liberty, to Republican Government, to America? It was any man who vociferated that party discipline must be maintained, and that every man must stand by his party, because only by party could the Government be carried on. Happily the cry was vain. The crisis was beyond party, and only because the people for that high hour rose superior to party was the Government maintained and the country saved.

The well-meaning and eloquent orators who rebuke political independence by declaring that we can achieve great results only by party, which is a fact that nobody denies, forget that party spirit is the one fire that needs no fanning. The first duty of patriotism is to keep that fire low. The natural tendency of party is to magnify and extend its sway, to identify itself with the country, and to seek its own power and aggrandizement. Party spirit instinctively sophisticates the individual conscience and divides the whole country into two hostile camps, whose soldiers hold each other to be practically traitors to the common welfare. Within a month I read with pain some words of an old political and personal friend in Congress whose unflinching courage by my side in a moment of great personal peril in the

fiery crisis of the old anti-slavery agitation, I shall always gratefully remember. During the recent tariff debate in the House of Representatives an earnest tariff reformer spoke of Mr. Lowell as a distinguished diplomatist under the late Republican administration, and instantly my friend exclaimed: "Benedict Arnold was a Major-General in the Continental Army." Benedict Arnold held the military commission of his country, and in the darkest hour of the revolution sought to betray to the enemy for a reward an important military post confided to his honorable care. There is no blacker crime. What is the crime of Mr. Lowell? He differs from my friend and from part of the party with which he formerly acted, upon the best method of reducing the surplus in the Treasury, and he has highly praised the President to whom my friend is politically opposed. For these reasons my friend, publicly, in the national capitol, couples the name of one of the noblest living Americans, of lofty genius and character, one of the most spotless of citizens, one of the most upright of men, with the most infamous name in American history. The Latin poet says that anger is a brief madness. Party spirit is a frenzy which imbrutes the soul. Here is an honorable public servant, a kindly gentleman, an honest man, and party spirit forces from his lips a taunt regarding another gentleman not less honest, honorable, and kindly, which it is impossible that he believes. Do the orators, who perpetually remind us that nothing can be done without party as if we doubted it, really think that fact to be a reason constantly to inflame to fury the spirit of party? Is there an intelligent American who does not see that, under the pretence of maintaining party organization, to abandon the whole Civil Service in every branch, and to a successful party is to fan a conflagration with a gale?

“In Governments of a monarchical cast patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency it is certain there will be always enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constantly danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming it should consume.” The words are not mine. They are those of the greatest American, of the man so pure and wise that affectionate veneration has canonized him; of the patriot who happier than Moses, not only led us through the Red sea but into the promised land and showed us how to make it Beulah. They are the words of Washington. The great national conventions about to assemble to nominate his successor in the Presidency, may wisely ponder, not only the character of the man and the principles and spirit of his administration, but the reason of his permanent hold upon the love and pride of the American people. That reason is their profound belief not only in the wisdom and sincerity of his views, but in his unbending official fidelity to his convictions. It is the certainty that no consideration of party, no allurements of personal ambition, no blandishments of flattery or sophistry, no fear of popular disfavor, or dictation of imperious politicians, could have moved him from the course that his convictions and conscience had prescribed, or have persuaded him to degrade the public service into party plunder.

Those conventions, also, may well heed the memory of that host of heroes whose graves to-morrow will be strewn with flowers.

In no country was there ever a more beautiful benediction upon patriotism or a more touching tribute of national gratitude. The eloquence of Pericles has embalmed the Peloponnesian dead, but the affection of America consecrates the memory of our boys in blue. It was country, not party; it was duty, not ambition; it was liberty, and union the impregnable bulwark of liberty, for which they made the costly sacrifice. They were patriots to whom America meant not only nationality, and justice, and equality, and obedience to law, but also political progress, the righting of public wrongs, the ability of the people to see their own errors and constantly to strengthen by purifying their own government. They died to serve these great ends. Let us live to serve them. As we scatter flowers upon their graves let us baptize ourselves in their spirit, and with their abiding faith in the people, seeing everywhere the signs that the America of their hope shall be the America of our children, let us say with Samuel Adams, when he heard the shots at Lexington, and knew that the revolution had begun, "Oh what a glorious morning!"



## RESOLUTIONS

PASSED BY THE LEAGUE ON THE SECOND DAY OF ITS MEETING,  
MAY 30, 1888.

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The League congratulates the country upon the general and profound interest in the reform of the civil service which has been awakened by the agitation of the question. Founded upon the soundest principles of efficient administration, congenial to the American instinct of fair play and equal rights, representing the earnest conviction and desire of the most patriotic citizens, the League is deeply encouraged by the progress and the prospects of the cause and pledges itself to still more strenuous exertions, in perfect confidence of ultimate triumph.

The National Civil-Service Reform League acknowledges that the scope of the classified service has been somewhat enlarged and that the rules and regulations have been revised and improved. But in many instances the forms of the Civil-Service Reform law have been so abused by appointees of the administration who are not in sympathy with reform as to bring about widespread distrust in reform methods. No law can be efficiently enforced by officials who are not in sympathy with its objects and aim to evade its requirements and one of the most important duties of an administration is to remove such officials. The League reaffirms its declaration of last year that the change in the unclassified service is so great as to forecast its practically complete partisan reconstruction by the close of the administration. It regards this fact as the loss of a great opportunity by the President, and as a serious public misfortune. Neither the welfare of the service nor any public advantage whatever has been shown to

demand so general a change and it can be attributed only to a partisan pressure for wholly partisan objects which the President has unfortunately not resisted. These general partisan changes in the unclassified service, the disregard of the notorious and flagrant defiance of the executive circular of July 14th, 1886, warning certain officers of the government against pernicious activity in politics, and the President's letter of November 2d, 1887, advocating the choice of a particular candidate in a municipal election, seriously discredit the cause of reform, and merit the public condemnation which they have received. But the League submits to the country that the force and character of that condemnation and the severe standard of executive conduct in regard to the civil service by which the administration is judged, are the strongest evidences of an earnest public demand for the overthrow of the spoils system and justly encourage the League and all friends of reform in renewed and hopeful activity to secure radical and thorough reform.

The activity of parties in the maintenance of party principles is commendable. But the endeavor to promote the success of a party in elections, or the success of a faction in conventions by enlisting the activity of persons holding public office, and therefore charged with public trust, is a perversion of the true function of a party, and tends inevitably, as all experience shows, to defeat the true object of political discussion, and to convert parties into machines, intended solely to promote the personal interests of their managers.

The laws which limit the tenure of inferior officers to four years and which are a prolific source of intrigue and corruption, should be repealed, that honesty, competency, and efficiency may be the sole condition of employment in the public service. An office-holding class, and a permanent tenure are practically impossible so long as the power of removal remains unimpaired.

The League reiterates its declaration of the desirability of an enlargement of the classified service as heretofore recommended,

and especially an application of the rules to the Indian Department in which, according to the reports of the Indian Rights Association, based upon personal and unprejudiced observation, the familiar political abuse of the service runs riot to the disgrace of the American name.

The League earnestly recommends to its constituent associations :

1. That the associations in those states in which no civil service law has been adopted exert themselves to the utmost to promote the passage of laws establishing the merit system of appointments to office in the penal, reformatory, charitable and educational institutions and principal cities in the respective states in which such associations are organized.

2. That the associations in those states in which civil service laws have been enacted watch vigilantly over the manner in which those laws are enforced, and guard against any alteration which shall impair their efficiency.

3. That the associations continue the practice of interrogating candidates for office as to their views respecting the merit system of appointment, and their willingness to aid in the enforcement of existing laws respecting the same, or in the enactment of laws which shall extend the operation of that system and render it most effective.

The following were also adopted :

“ Public officers entrusted with power of appointment and removal should be required by law or executive order, to place upon public record all appointments, removals and resignations, and the reason for every removal made by them : and appointing officers, when in their discretion they do not select those rated

highest upon the eligible list presented to them, should be required in each case to file their reasons for such action."

"*Resolved*, that, while we fully recognize that the absolute power of removal must be vested in the appointing power subject only to a sound discretion, the system of making removals upon secret charges or specified acts preferred by unknown accusers, without opportunity for explanation or denial, is inquisitorial in its character, unjust in its results, and, like the spoils system itself, repugnant to the spirit of American institutions."







*Publications of the New York Civil-Service Reform Ass'n.*

- Daniel Webster and the Spoils System.** An extract from Senator Bayard's oration at Dartmouth College, June, 1882. Per copy, 3 cts.  
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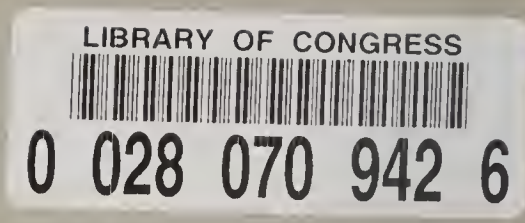
Also a few copies of some early publications.

MISCELLANEOUS.

- Civil Service in Great Britain.** By Dorman B. Eaton. Per copy, 25 cts.
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- Civil-Service Examinations.** Being question papers with actual answers of successful and unsuccessful candidates. By R. R. Bowker.  
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- The same for 1885.**
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The formation of local Associations in every locality where a nucleus can be found is much to be desired, and the League will be glad to assist any movement in that direction. Each Association, when formed, should establish an official connection with the National League. The details of the organization having been furnished to the Executive Committee through the Secretary, that Committee is authorized to admit the association to membership in the League, whereupon it is entitled to elect a member of the General Committee and a representative Vice-President. The Secretary should thereafter be kept informed of the progress of the work, and of changes of officers as they may occur.

Address

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